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First Committee

8th meeting

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Official Records

Chairman: Mr. De Alba

(Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Tham (Myanmar): I have the honour and privilege to take the floor on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN): Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own delegation, Myanmar.

The ASEAN countries believe that the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons is a very important contribution to the international community's efforts for peace and security. It is the conviction of the ASEAN countries that, in view of recent political developments, there now exist conditions for the establishment of a world free from nuclear weapons.

The ASEAN countries also reaffirm the unanimous conclusion of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996, that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith, and bring to conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. In that regard, we, the ASEAN countries, continue to support and intend to joint in

sponsoring the draft resolution, similar to that submitted every year by Malaysia, reaffirming that important ruling.

For a number of years, the ASEAN countries have been sponsors of the yearly draft resolutions on nuclear disarmament initiated by Myanmar, calling upon nuclear-weapon States to stop immediately the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. The draft resolution (A/C.1/59/L.25) urges nuclear-weapon States, as an immediate measure, to de-alert and deactivate immediately their nuclear weapons and to take further concrete measures to further reduce the operational status of their nuclear weapon systems. It also calls for the convening of an international conference on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects at an early date to identify and deal with concrete measures of nuclear disarmament.

Those two draft resolutions are part of ASEAN members' contributions to the cause of disarmament. This year, Malaysia and Myanmar, with the support of ASEAN and other sponsors, will again submit such draft resolutions. It is our ardent hope that they will enjoy broader support and increased sponsorship.

The ASEAN countries have consistently stressed the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We reiterate our call to the nuclear-weapon States to make further efforts towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

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In that context, we welcomed the convening of the third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, held in Vienna in September 2003. We also welcomed the adoption by the Conference of the 12 concrete measures, contained in the Final Declaration of the Conference, to promote the early entry into force of the CTBT. We are encouraged that three nuclear-weapon States have ratified that important Treaty to date.

We welcome the positive outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The ASEAN countries particularly welcome the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties are committed under article VI of the Treaty. We reiterate our view that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We therefore call once again for the full and effective implementation of the steps set out in the 2000 Final Document. In that connection, we reaffirm our conviction that there exists an urgent need for the nuclear-weapon States to take concrete measures to fulfil their obligations under the NPT, in particular article VI on nuclear disarmament and article IV, on technical assistance to non-nuclear-weapon States in the application of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

We note with appreciation the preparatory work done by the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the NPT at its first session, held in New York in April 2002, its second session, held in Geneva in April and May 2003, and its third session, held in New York in April and May 2004. However, we regret the inability of the Preparatory Committee to agree at its third session on an agenda and on substantive recommendations for the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

In that context, we reaffirm the importance of establishing subsidiary bodies at the 2005 Review Conference, in accordance with rule 34 of the Conference's draft rules of procedure, to consider issues related to nuclear disarmament, safety and security of peaceful nuclear programmes, security assurances and regional issues, with particular reference to the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

We strongly believe that the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones declared by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba has been a positive step towards attaining the objective of global nuclear disarmament. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned.

The ASEAN countries, through sustained efforts, have successfully established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. The Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone entered into force on 27 March 1997. A Protocol is annexed to the treaty for accession by the nuclear-weapon States. In welcoming the announcement by China at the ASEAN-China summit, in November 2002, of its readiness to accede to the Protocol, we wish to reiterate our call to nuclear-weapon States to accede to the Protocol as soon as possible. We welcome the progress in the implementation of the Treaty and stress the importance of direct consultations between ASEAN and the five nuclear-weapon States. We consider this to be significant progress towards encouraging the accession of the nuclear-weapon States to the Protocol to the Treaty. We also reaffirm the importance of vigorous efforts to further strengthen cooperation in supporting the implementation of the Treaty, with a view to promoting the purposes and objectives of the Treaty, particularly ensuring early accession by the nuclear-weapon States.

We welcome the signing of the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II — Bali Concord II — at the ninth ASEAN Summit, held in Bali, Indonesia in 2003, which decided to establish an ASEAN community comprising three pillars — political and security cooperation; economic cooperation; and socio-cultural cooperation — in line with the ASEAN Vision 2020, as a community of South-East Asian nations bound together in partnership, in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies. The ASEAN community would be achieved through the framework of the ASEAN security community, the ASEAN economic community and the ASEAN socio-cultural community. In that regard, we commended the substantial progress made since the adoption of ASEAN Concord II in the formulation and finalization of the plans of action for those three pillars, as the basis of ASEAN's drive towards full integration.

The ASEAN countries continue to attach special importance to confidence-building efforts among the countries of the region. ASEAN has been steadfastly undertaking concrete measures to enhance regional security through various initiatives at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

We note the positive developments in the ASEAN Regional Forum process through inter-session activities and linkages between track I and track II. We take note with satisfaction, of the fruitful discussions and exchange of views at the eleventh ARF, held in Jakarta in July 2004, which welcomed the admission of Pakistan as the twenty-fourth participant in the ARF. We are particularly encouraged that the eleventh ARF reaffirmed the crucial role of the ARF as the main political and security forum in the region.

We resolve to ensure that ASEAN will continue to enhance its leading role to further the momentum of cooperation in further advancing the ARF process as its contribution to the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. It has also recognized the purposes and principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia as the key code of conduct for the promotion of cooperation, amity and friendship within South-East Asia and between ASEAN and other ARF participants. We welcome the accession to the Treaty by the People's Republic of China and India in October 2003 and by Japan and Pakistan in July 2004, and we look forward to the accession of the Russian Federation later this year. In that connection, we call on the non-Southeast Asian countries to consider acceding to the Treaty.

We also note with satisfaction the level of confidence and trust that had been developed under the auspices of the ARF, with activities in the overlapping areas of confidence-building measures and preventive diplomacy, which the ARF has begun to undertake.

We take this opportunity to express, once again, our appreciation to the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa for their effective contributions towards international peace and security. Regional seminars and forums organized by those Centres effectively contribute to the progress of the ongoing security and disarmament process in their respective regions.

We highly appreciate and fully support the dynamic activities and the substantial contributions to

the security dialogue of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, which has raised awareness of disarmament issues in the region. We welcome the convening of United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues, held in Sapporo, Japan, in July 2004, which focused, among other things, on the mounting challenges to nuclear non-proliferation and international responses; the nuclear black market; strengthening the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency; and challenges and prospects with regard to the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

We once again renew our commitment to multilateralism as an important means of pursuing and achieving our common objectives in the field of disarmament, and our determination to further promote multilateralism in that respect. It is now more urgent than ever for us, the international community, to strive for international peace and security and to redouble our efforts and live up to our commitments to the goal of creating a nuclear-weapon-free world. We, the ASEAN countries, once again reaffirm our commitment to work cooperatively to achieve those goals as a matter of utmost priority.

Mr. Chimphamba (Malawi): On behalf of my delegation, Mr. Chairman, I would like to join all the other delegations who have spoken before me in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to guide the work of this very important Committee. We are confident, Sir, that your knowledge and vast experience will steer our work towards achieving lasting peace and security. My delegation therefore assures you of its full cooperation and support in that noble endeavour.

As we meet once again to deliberate in the First Committee during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, we are aware that neither the Disarmament Commission nor the Conference on Disarmament has been able to reach consensus on a programme of work or an agenda. We therefore call for a greater show of political will from all the major players interested in the real consolidation of the central role of the United Nations in ensuring peace and security around the world.

Malawi is encouraged by concerted global efforts to avert and stop the threat of international terrorism. We are keenly aware of the danger of terrorists recklessly resorting to the use of weapons of mass

destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, chemical weapons and biological weapons.

It is against that background that we remain concerned that some of the critical legal instruments governing the multilateral disarmament regime have recently come under threat or have stalled in implementation. In that regard, Malawi reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) by member States and continues to call for its universality.

It is our hope that the forthcoming 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will not follow the same pattern as the last three preparatory meetings, where difficulties were created by the widely divergent perspectives among the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States.

Malawi again welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service to operationalize the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — or Ottawa Convention. It is clear that the fight against the spread of landmines has been successfully fought under regional and international initiatives. In that regard, we wish to state that Malawi will attend the First Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 29 November to 3 December 2004.

Members may wish to know that Malawi is in the process of implementing the Convention through a multisectoral approach that involves Government and civil society. The Government of Malawi has been able to participate in the meetings of parties to the Convention since it has had access to the sponsorship programme; that has helped the country to make progress in the implementation of the Convention.

Let me conclude by joining the rest of the international community in addressing the problems of small arms and light weapons, which not only pose a threat to the security of States, but also endanger their socio-economic and political stability. Malawi is satisfied with the important progress achieved with respect to the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and the activity of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. We agree that small arms and light weapons should be supplied only to Governments or

other duly authorized entities and that arms transfers must be subject to national, regional and international control in order to prevent weapons from landing in the hands of heartless terrorists and non-State actors.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I am pleased to express our happiness at seeing you leading the Committee's proceedings. I am confident that your wide capabilities and expertise — grounded in your country's principled and steadfast positions on disarmament matters — will enable us to complete our work constructively and successfully. By the same token, I would like to thank Mr. Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his statement at the beginning of our general debate. Please rest assured, Mr. Chairman, of the cooperation of my delegation in achieving success in the work of the First Committee.

The picture of international peace and security once again appears gloomy. Statements made in the General Assembly by heads of State or Government, by ministers of foreign affairs and by other representatives drew an accurate picture of the international political scene today, where might prevails over law, wrong over right, and war over peace. Cold-war justifications for exorbitant military expenditures have come to an end. The same applies to today's pre-emptive wars, whose costs are very high in terms of human life and property — as we can see from a look at the deteriorating military situation.

There are clear cases on the ground for all to see. This situation cannot resolve itself. It must be resolved through a universal solidarity that combines sincere efforts with the steadfast political will to respect international legitimacy and to work in a multilateral way that can restore the world's equilibrium and ensure its continued existence.

The Conference on Disarmament was established as a result of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978. At that session, the international community specified that nuclear disarmament was a priority and entrusted the Conference with accomplishing that task in the framework of a specific agenda. We have had numerous failures and few successes in that endeavour. The Conference's basic task as a multilateral negotiating forum to conclude a legally binding international instrument for nuclear disarmament within a specified time frame has not seen much

progress. That failure is of the work of certain Powers, which have hampered the international effort, and results also from a lack of sufficient international will to achieve the Conference's goals. The Conference has thus been prevented from achieving its goals and fulfilling its responsibilities.

Unwarranted double standards have emerged in dealing with matters relating to disarmament. While nuclear arsenals and stockpiles are growing, while new types of nuclear weapons are being invented and while the use of such weapons is posing a real threat, States are being pressured to prevent them from possessing the means of defending their security and sovereignty. That right is enshrined in the United Nations Charter, international law and international conventions in force.

At a time when we aspire to a total elimination of nuclear weapons and to achieving the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a blind eye is turned to those who possess such weapons outside the non-proliferation regime. Worse still, such States are given support while others are barred from using nuclear technology for peaceful and development purposes.

We believe that it is more important than ever before to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, with a view to reviewing and assessing the implementation of the recommendations of the first special session on disarmament, held in 1978. We hope that this will enable us to reconsider and review the most important aspects of disarmament in a comprehensive manner that takes into consideration the current international situation. We hope it will also enable us to take serious action to eliminate nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in a multilateral international framework and in a manner that will achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

Syria has expressed its support of a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East. It continues to call on Israel to withdraw from all Arab territories occupied since 1967. But Israel persists in pursuing an expansionist, aggressive policy backed by a huge arsenal containing all types of weapons: conventional, non-conventional and weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. More than any other region in the world, the Middle East region is

still subject to threats and the falsification of facts. Syria was among the first States that called for ridding the Middle East region of WMDs, especially nuclear weapons, and it has acted with determination to fulfill that purpose. It has contributed numerous initiatives designed to achieve that goal. The most recent was the draft resolution that we presented on behalf of the Arab Group to the Security Council on 29 December 2003, aimed at ridding the region of all WMDs, in particular nuclear weapons. This should be done under collective international control and under United Nations supervision in a manner that fosters the role of multilateral international conventions relating to disarmament.

Lack of agreement for the Arab initiative encourages Israel to consistently refuse to accede to the NPT and to place all its nuclear facilities and activities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. In this regard, we hope that the NPT Review Conference to be held next year will adopt an unambiguous call to Israel to accede to the Treaty. We also hope that it will set up effective machinery to achieve that goal in a manner conducive to stability and to a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

My country contributes to activities under the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms. It participated in last year's meeting held by the Department for Disarmament Affairs in Cairo in cooperation with the League of Arab States. It is preparing to take part in the meeting to be held in Algeria later this year for this purpose. We hope that meeting will be successful.

The United Nations has been the only place in which faithful efforts are made in a multilateral framework in order to achieve our aspirations of eliminating WMDs of all types, particularly nuclear weapons, and to spare humanity the danger of their use forever.

Mr. Seale (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to join the previous speakers in warmly congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I also wish to congratulate all the other members of the Bureau. Your extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy and your comprehensive grasp of disarmament issues, Mr. Chairman, guarantee the success of our work. The delegation of Togo, for its part, wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation.

In his introductory statement at the beginning of our work, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs made a point of recalling the First Committee's highly complex and significant role in meeting the challenges facing us despite divergences in national interest, given the fundamental demands made on the United Nations in the area of international peace and security. These major challenges can indeed be met only through scrupulous respect by all States, individually and collectively, for the international engagements to which they have subscribed and which deal with, *inter alia*, the non-proliferation of weapons, a halt to the nuclear arms race, a ban on the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and general and complete disarmament with strengthened verification measures under United Nations control. Here we would like to welcome the unilateral decision of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to renounce its programmes of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

Togo, for its part, supports the principle of general and complete disarmament in all its forms and is engaged in ratifying and implementing the majority of the relevant conventions. Thus, my country, on 1 July 2004, deposited its instrument of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

On the regional level, Togo is implementing the moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms in West Africa. Here we sincerely hope that the negotiations begun in June 2004 to draw up an international instrument that would allow States to identify and monitor the routes used for illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons will be concluded as soon as possible. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to urge the international community to support our national commission to combat the spread and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which my country established some time ago.

On the subject of disarmament and international peace and security, we must also bring up the important role that should be allocated to United Nations Regional Centres for peace and disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Asia and the Pacific, and in Africa. Created in the context of the cold war, those institutions are now called upon to act in synergy with regional organizations to combat the many problems linked not only to the issue of disarmament, but, above all, to the advancement of peace and to

post-conflict peacebuilding in regions torn apart by these conflicts, in particular in Africa.

Unfortunately, the Regional Centres are now in a most critical financial situation. Therefore, as was rightly emphasized by the head of the Togolese delegation during the general debate of the present session of the General Assembly (see A/59/PV.13), the Committee must devote greater attention to the worrisome financial situation of the three United Nations Regional Centres for peace and disarmament so that those institutions can have access to the financial resources they need to carry out their mandates.

In that regard, on the basis of the relevant reports of the Secretary-General, Togo firmly believes it is high time that the General Assembly set about reviewing ways to finance the Regional Centres to provide them with adequate financial means. By so doing, the Assembly would demonstrate its genuine support for the Organization's objectives in the areas of arms control, disarmament and peacebuilding and its appreciation of the very active role played by the Centres.

With regard to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa — which my country hosts — there can be doubt that that institution continues to make commendable efforts to carry out its assigned objectives, despite the financial difficulties it faces. As the Secretary-General emphasized in the summary of his report (A/59/209),

"Within its limited financial resources, the Centre continued to implement its programme of work in the four priority areas endorsed in 1999 by the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of African States: support for peace processes and peace initiatives in Africa; practical disarmament and arms control; information, research and publication; and advocacy and resource mobilization".

The continued and alarming lack of financial resources is now drastically reducing the Regional Centre's capacity to implement its mandate and to carry out its ambitious and highly useful programme at this time of general insecurity, when peace is constantly threatened. In the light of that dilemma, Togo would like once again to invite Member States and other partners to revisit the problem and identify a

solution likely to guarantee the viability of the Centres, particularly the Lomé Centre.

Mr. Gatun (Philippines): The Philippines associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of the 10 members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

We take this opportunity to commend Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe and the Department for Disarmament Affairs for supporting our disarmament cause.

The Philippines shares the concern of other delegations over the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in the multilateral arena. Regrettably, there was no substantive discussion during the last session of the Disarmament Commission, which became bogged down on the issue of agenda-setting despite the efforts of the Chairman. Furthermore, the third and final session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) failed to produce a consensus report containing a substantive recommendation for the Conference.

Notwithstanding those setbacks, my delegation notes recent promising developments. First of all, the first session of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in June this year, promised further efforts to curb the problem brought about by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It is fortunate that that issue continues to remain at the forefront of United Nations concerns.

The Philippines has been taking every possible step to enhance our programme aimed at addressing problems related to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, marking and record-keeping, as well as cooperation in the tracing of small arms. The Philippine National Police has been strictly enforcing our basic firearms law, seeing to it that weapons manufacturing processes are in accordance with the law and other regulations. We also use a macro-etching process that enables us to determine or restore the original serial numbers of firearms that have been defaced or tampered with.

We also so congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election.

Secondly, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), with its verification and on-site inspection regime, is a major contribution to the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. Last month, the Philippines endorsed the joint ministerial statement on the CTBT (A/59/550, annex), which called for universal adherence to the Treaty. Once again, we join the appeal to all States to refrain from pursuing programmes that would undermine the CTBT pending its entry into force.

The Philippines has consistently stressed the importance of achieving universal adherence to the NPT. It is indeed disappointing to note that, four years after the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the collective and unequivocal commitment by nuclear-weapon States to the transparent, accountable and verifiable elimination of their nuclear arsenals remains largely unrealized. Once again, we urge concerned States to undertake further efforts to eliminate all nuclear weapons.

The Philippines also reaffirms its support for the much-delayed convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). In that regard, much work has already been done in the Disarmament Commission on the agenda and objectives of SSOD IV. Let us not relent in our resolve to convene a new special session, bearing in mind the fast-developing events in the international peace and security environment.

My delegation is encouraged by the recent developments in our region related to the imminent formation of an ASEAN security community, which would lead to an ASEAN whose members were at peace with one another and with the world at large. We are of the view that an ASEAN security community would strengthen our capacity to deal with security challenges, both traditional and non-traditional.

The Philippines views nuclear-weapon-free zones not only as instruments for nuclear non-proliferation, but also as important contributions to nuclear disarmament. In our region, we remain hopeful that there will be fruitful negotiations with nuclear Powers on the South-East Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. My delegation also acknowledges China's interest in acceding to the zone.

In conclusion, the Philippines associates itself with the call of other delegations for comprehensive reform not only of the General Assembly but also of

the Main Committees, to allow them to respond more effectively to the challenges that confront our ever-changing world.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. Chairman, since this is the first time I have taken the floor, I wish to congratulate you on your election. I am sure that, under your experienced leadership, our deliberations will be successful. My delegation offers its full support to you and to the other members of the Bureau, working under your able guidance.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the delegation of Brazil on behalf of the countries members of the Rio Group. We wish additionally to comment on a number of items on the Committee's agenda that are of particular importance to Ecuador.

My Government attaches vital importance to general, complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament and TO THE non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). We are convinced that international peace and security, to a great extent, depend on the achievement of those objectives. For that reason, we are concerned by the lack of progress in the sphere of disarmament at the multilateral level. For seven years, the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to hold a substantive session. Nor was the Disarmament Commission able to reach agreement on an agenda at its 259th meeting. Moreover, the Preparatory Committee for the May 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been unable to make substantive recommendations.

We thus have even greater reason to reaffirm our support for the objectives of the NPT, especially for the need for nuclear States to report on progress in the dismantling and total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, in keeping with their obligations under article VI of the Treaty, as well as the commitments they undertook at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and at the 2000 Review Conference.

We view the NPT as a basic instrument for achieving a safer and more peaceful world. Thus, universal adherence and total and non-discriminatory compliance with its provisions are necessary. We urge States that have not yet become parties to the Treaty, and nuclear-weapon States in particular, to accede to the Treaty as soon as possible so that their nuclear

facilities can be subjected to International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) safeguards and so that they undertake to carry out their nuclear programmes within the framework of the non-proliferation regime. In that context, we are greatly concerned at the modernization of nuclear weapons by some Powers that have also shown a lack of will to carry out substantive negotiations on their total elimination.

The lack of progress in the nuclear disarmament process makes it necessary to agree on a legally binding instrument through which nuclear Powers would guarantee not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against States that do not possess such weapons or that are Party to the Treaty. Likewise, we are convinced that only the total elimination of arsenals of weapons of mass destruction will guarantee that they do not fall into the hands of terrorists or other non-State actors.

We support Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) against WMD proliferation, which aims, in particular, at preventing terrorists and other non-State actors from having access to such weapons. Nevertheless, we consider such legally binding measures, which represent a commitment for all United Nations Member States, should be negotiated and adopted at the multilateral level; in that way, we could avoid a situation whereby limited groups that do not represent all the States Members of the United Nations could seek to impose such measures through a process that is not contemplated by the Charter.

A few days ago, as part of its commitment to disarmament, Ecuador signed the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, also known as the Hague Code of Conduct, which has been signed by 117 countries. We have sponsored the draft resolution submitted by the delegation of Chile in its capacity as Chairman of the Code of Conduct; we are aware that the adoption of that important text will establish cooperation between the Code and the United Nations.

Ecuador supports complete implementation of the July 2001 Programme of Action on the Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and of the recommendations of the first substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing small arms and light weapons, held in June 2004.

In the 12 July 2004 Declaration adopted at the San Francisco de Quito summit of the Andean Community, the Presidents of the Andean countries renewed their commitment to give a greater thrust to the strategy of member countries on preventing, combating and eradicating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects through the implementation of decision 552, adopted by the Andean Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Andean Community. Additionally, the heads of State instructed their respective national authorities to create, before December 2004, national coordinating committees. We also support the proclamation of the Andean peace area, contained in the San Francisco de Quito Declaration of 12 July, adopted at the fifteenth summit of the Presidents of the Andean countries; this act promotes peaceful coexistence among the countries of the subregion: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

Before concluding my statement, I would like to highlight the particular importance that my country confers on the Convention on the Banning of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, to which it became a party on 29 April 1999. After four years of arduous work in large populated areas of our southern border, we have been able to remove and destroy these lethal artefacts, thanks to valuable contributions made by Canada, Japan and the United States, some of which were channelled through the Organization of American States. Nonetheless, there are still extensive mined areas along the border which need to be cleaned up.

Ecuador has the honour to inform the Committee that, in compliance with its commitments under the Ottawa Convention, it has acted to destroy the totality of its stockpiles of anti-personnel mines. In view of that experience, my delegation calls on countries that are not yet parties to the Convention to accede as soon as possible so that it may become a universal instrument.

Mr. Kaludjerević (Serbia and Montenegro): At the outset, Sir, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that, with your outstanding professional skills and experience, we shall have successful and fruitful deliberations. In that regard, you can count on the support and full cooperation of my delegation. Allow me also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election.

Serbia and Montenegro has aligned itself with the statement of the Netherlands made on behalf of the European Union. At this point, I would like to make the following additional remarks.

There is no doubt that international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) pose the most serious security threat of our time. The link among the proliferation of such weapons, new forms of terrorism and transnational organized crime undermines global peace and security and requires resolute and timely action by the international community.

We cannot afford to fail in this effort, since the risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists could have tragic consequences of unprecedented proportions. The international community should therefore consolidate and step up its efforts to deal successfully with each global threat. In doing so, the United Nations should play a central role in the context of cooperation with the relevant regional and subregional organizations.

The United Nations has at its disposal appropriate mechanisms for the promotion of international peace and security. In order to achieve that goal, we have to improve existing disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control instruments. It is particularly important to achieve universality of the existing instruments and to enhance their effectiveness by enforcing strict compliance and strengthening verification regimes.

In order to increase confidence among Member States and promote peace and security, we should encourage greater transparency and a more extensive exchange of information in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In addition, my country attaches particular importance to the strengthening of regional stability and security as well as to the promotion of good-neighbourly relations with all States in our region. In that respect, Serbia and Montenegro is very active in regional initiatives such as the South-East Europe Security Cooperation Steering Group (SEEGROUP), the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC), the South-Eastern European Cooperation Process (SEECT) and the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. We pay special attention to the implementation of the agreement on subregional arms control, which made a major contribution to the

promotion of stability and security in the region of South-Eastern Europe.

Serbia and Montenegro is fully committed to honouring the obligations it has undertaken under international treaties in this field. My country ratified the Ottawa Convention in September 2003, and the Convention entered into force on 1 March 2004. As a country seriously affected by the problem of landmines, Serbia and Montenegro shares the view of the importance of the full implementation of the Ottawa Convention to the promotion of greater security and trust.

Serbia and Montenegro stands ready to honour its obligations under the Convention, including the destruction of 1.3 million anti-personnel-landmine stocks in the upcoming four-year period. However, in order to fulfil that obligation in a timely and proper fashion, we need additional financial resources. I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) for its assistance, and I would like to invite others to help us in this effort.

Nevertheless, there is another segment of the implementation of the Convention that is equally important and that represents a problem for developing countries and post-conflict societies. The rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of landmine victims is an issue that should be addressed in a more effective and concrete manner by the international community.

As a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Serbia and Montenegro supports efforts to achieve its universality and full implementation. We attach great importance to the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, with which we signed the Framework Agreement on Technical Cooperation in 2003.

Serbia and Montenegro has been making continued efforts to improve the protection and security measures for radioactive materials and supports the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

My country deposited its instrument of ratification for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on 19 May 2004, thereby joining 170 States parties to the Treaty. We favour the early entry into force of the CTBT and, in that context, we

supported the September 2004 ministerial statement on the CTBT.

I would like to point once again to the need for serious action aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Serbia and Montenegro supports and is ready to participate in all international efforts aimed at suppressing the spread of this type of weapon. We consider that Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) is an important step in that direction. In addition to making every possible international effort, it is of the utmost importance to adopt adequate laws at the national level in order to create conditions for strict arms trade control.

In Serbia and Montenegro, the process of the adoption of a new law on trade in arms, military equipment and dual-purpose goods is under way and is expected to be adopted soon.

Serbia and Montenegro fully abides by the provisions of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and supports all efforts aimed at improving the Convention's non-proliferation regime.

My country supports the universal and strict implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and it is ready to honour its obligations under articles 5 and 6 of the Convention. Last July, Serbia and Montenegro organized an international training course in Krusevac on protection against chemical weapons, with the participation of representatives from 16 countries.

Furthermore, as a subscribing State, we fully support the Hague Code of Conduct as a very important initiative in dealing with missile proliferation.

The Government of Serbia and Montenegro also adopted a declaration stating that it is undertaking voluntarily to comply with and implement the provisions contained in the Missile Technology Control Regime documents.

Unfortunately, my country's experience has demonstrated the gravity of the danger posed by the spread of illegal small arms and light weapons and the destabilizing effect it can have on social and economic development. We therefore support the activities of the Working Group to negotiate an international instrument which would enable States to combat more effectively the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons. Such an instrument would also enable greater international

cooperation through the adoption of common standards in marking, record-keeping and the exchange of information.

Serbia and Montenegro accepted amended article 1 of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and acceded to Additional Protocol IV. We also participated in the negotiations which led to the adoption of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war.

We continue to support the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on explosive remnants of war and mines other than anti-personnel mines, and we hope that those negotiations will be brought to a successful close.

Last but not least, Serbia and Montenegro is firmly committed to reforming and streamlining the First Committee. We are confident that, by working together, we can find ways to improve the work of the First Committee so that it can address more effectively threats to international peace and security.

Mr. Ayalew (Nigeria): Since this is the first time that I am taking the floor, I wish warmly to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that you will provide the requisite leadership to steer our work to a successful conclusion. Let me also, through you, congratulate other members of the Bureau on their election. I wish to assure you and the Bureau of the full cooperation of my delegation.

I wish also to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, for his introductory statement, which we found very useful.

This meeting is being held at a time when the international community is faced with increasingly divergent views on how best to address the issues of arms control and disarmament. The need to implement disarmament and non-proliferation measures continues to be a major challenge in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The past decade has witnessed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the successful negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines. Those achievements

flowed from shared international concerns about the danger that weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons pose to humankind.

By contrast, the international community has recorded a string of failures on arms control and disarmament since the beginning of this decade. The CTBT has not yet entered into force due to its lack of ratification by some States whose ratification is mandatory for it to enter into force. The negotiations to conclude a compliance protocol on biological weapons remain inconclusive, just as no progress has been made in negotiating an instrument to ban the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. The potential paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament appears to have assumed a permanent character. Of no less significance is the failure of other disarmament machinery, in particular the Disarmament Commission, to agree on an agenda for its work. Similarly, despite the efforts made over the past several years, the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) remains as elusive as ever.

With regard to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, Nigeria fully supports the proposal made by the representatives of Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden — the five ambassadors' proposal — as a mechanism for breaking the existing impasse in agreeing on a work programme for the Conference. Nigeria also believes that it is time to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. But, for the outcome to be meaningful, it should contain a reliable verification mechanism that does not exclude existing stockpiles.

In the face of the general stalemate in the field of arms control and disarmament, we are convinced that the time has come for all States to demonstrate the necessary political will in order to make progress in this area, especially in confronting the common challenge of the proliferation of arms around the globe. One of these major challenges is the threat posed by the existence, and the consequent proliferation, of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. As a result, those weapons continue to be an issue of grave concern to the international community. Member States have a moral obligation towards humankind to totally eliminate those weapons and to achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control. That is the most

effective way to guarantee that the weapons do not fall into the hands of non-State actors or terrorists.

That brings me to the problem of lack of compliance with the nuclear non-proliferation regime by States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). As we all know, the Treaty remains one of the most vital instruments in the maintenance of international peace and security. The impression is often created that the obligation to comply with the Treaty lies only with non-nuclear-weapon States parties; that could be detrimental to the aims and objectives of the Treaty and, ultimately, to the enhancement of international peace and security. All States parties, nuclear and non-nuclear alike, have an obligation to ensure non-proliferation in all its aspects. In a similar manner, every State party is under an obligation to fulfil its commitment to the 13 practical steps adopted by consensus at the 2000 NPT Review Conference to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, in keeping with article VI of the Treaty.

There is need to reaffirm that commitment at the seventh Review Conference of the Treaty, to be held next year. It is regrettable, however, that, at its third session, held in May this year, the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference failed to agree on an agenda or recommendations for the Conference, thus raising doubts about the fate of the Review Conference and the NPT itself.

On regional disarmament, the Nigerian delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the concept of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States in the regions concerned. In that regard, we call for the ratification of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — the Treaty of Pelindaba — by the required number of States so that it can enter into force without further delay.

I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm Nigeria's commitment to the full implementation of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions, as recently demonstrated by my country's establishment of a national council for the full implementation of the two Conventions. The Federal Government has also submitted a national report to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in compliance with article III of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Furthermore, Nigeria has completed a

national register of chemical materials imported, produced or consumed in the country and is vigorously pursuing the establishment of a chemical reference laboratory where chemical samples will be tested. Two separate draft national laws, on chemical and biological weapons, are currently under active consideration by the appropriate organs of the State. The Federal Government of Nigeria is also seeking the cooperation of the OPCW in the review of existing laws of the Federation that impact on the national implementation legislation related to the two conventions.

Nigeria remains unequivocal in its support for the total elimination of all nuclear testing. It has always stressed the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), including by all nuclear-weapon States, which, among other things, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. In that regard, we call for the ratification of the Treaty by all States, in particular the remaining 11 of the 44 States whose ratification is mandatory for its entry into force. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, it is important that the moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions and explosions of any other nuclear device be maintained.

Nigeria reaffirms its commitment to the obligations undertaken in the Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 United Nations Conference on small arms and light weapons. We welcome the commencement of negotiations for an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely and reliable manner. The magnitude of the problem posed by the proliferation of small arms demands that the instrument envisaged should be legally binding for effective implementation. It is our belief that the success of the Open-ended Working Group on tracing will have a positive impact on the forthcoming Second Biennial Meeting of States on small arms in 2005 and on the small arms review conference in 2006, which will assess the progress made so far in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

In the West African subregion, to which we belong, consideration is currently being given to achieving the ultimate objective of transforming the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium on import and export of small arms from a political instrument, as it currently is, into

is legally binding convention. The cooperation of the international community will be absolutely essential in realizing that important objective.

Nigeria's unrelenting fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons was further advanced with the destruction, on 2 September 2004, of 1,139 illicit firearms and 1,474 items of ammunition, in commemoration of United Nations Small Arms Destruction Day. Earlier this year, from 22 to 24 March, a three-day ECOWAS conference on combating illicit small arms brokering and trafficking was held in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, under the sponsorship of the Governments of the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. The conference was successful in sensitizing ECOWAS member States about the problem of illicit brokering and helped in developing a common understanding of ways to address the problem, including subregional coordination mechanisms.

My delegation welcomes the forthcoming First Review Conference of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, known as the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World, to be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December this year, as an excellent opportunity not only to evaluate the progress that has been made in implementation over the past five years, but also to chart the course for the complete eradication of the weapons by the second review conference in 2009. We call upon all States parties to attend the Conference at the highest possible level.

This year, as it has done in the past, my delegation is again sponsoring a draft resolution entitled "United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services" (A/C.1/59/L.4). The programme, which Nigeria initiated in 1978, has trained 645 fellows from 152 States. We appreciate the support of the Member States that have continued to provide resources and facilities for participants in the programme. We are equally grateful to the Secretary-General for the able manner in which the Secretariat has implemented the programme over the years. We call on Member States to support the draft resolution on the programme, as they have always done in the past.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): Let me join all previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. My delegation is confident that under your keen stewardship the Committee will have a productive

session and will be successful in the endeavours we have embarked on. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Ambassador Saitov for his remarkable work accomplished during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

Every year Armenia takes the opportunity provided by the general debate to inform the Committee of its advances in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and to share its views on current political processes and challenges. This year is no exception. As a country that has adhered to the principles of non-proliferation and the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy from day one, Armenia attaches the highest importance to nuclear safety. On 8 January 2004, Armenia — the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent States to sign one — ratified its Additional Protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards agreement; it entered into force on 28 January 2004.

Armenia fully supports and endorses IAEA efforts to enhance the safety and security of radioactive sources. In a letter to the IAEA Director General in August 2004, Armenia's Foreign Minister informed him of my country's commitment to follow and promote the guidance contained in the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and to encourage other countries to do the same.

On 10 September 2004, during the Group of Eight (G-8) Senior Officials Group meeting with the former Soviet Union States in Geneva, Armenia was recognized as a participant in the G-8 Action Plan on Non-Proliferation and accepted the guidelines contained therein.

The Libyan example is an encouraging one. However, it has made the need for additional measures to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its verification efforts even more imperative. In that respect, Armenia encourages finding a negotiated solution to outstanding nuclear issues and supports all efforts towards that end.

In this age of globalization, with increasingly open borders, rapid communications and technological advances, the effectiveness of international export control regimes is more important than ever in furthering disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. I want to stress that my country is sparing

no effort to strengthen its national export control system, with a view to both guaranteeing the legitimate use of and trade in dual-use items and technologies and providing exporters and the international community with due assurances. I am pleased to state here that our law on State control over and the export of dual-use items and technologies, as well as on their transit through the territory of the Republic of Armenia was ratified and entered into force at the end of 2003. In May 2004 the Government of Armenia adopted a decree regulating expertise relating to dual-use items. It is currently working on updating its national control lists.

Effective export control implies well-trained and experienced specialists. In that respect, disarmament and education go hand in hand. We are doing our best to gain more experience in this field through participation in various cooperative regional and bilateral programmes. A number of seminars and training courses for representatives of different Government agencies on various aspects of export control and related issues have been organized in Armenia with the active support of the United States Government.

The efficient functioning of export control has become more important with the increased threat of international terrorism — amplified by the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) through their acquisition by non-State actors. Armenia supports Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which reaffirms that proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a threat to international peace and security. In that respect, joint efforts and the development and maintenance of effective export control regimes are needed to prevent the spread of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

Exactly a week ago Armenia became the newest subscriber to the Hague Code of Conduct against the proliferation of ballistic missiles, thus pledging itself to the common goal of preventing and curbing the proliferation of ballistic missile systems capable of delivering WMDs. My country considers this to be one of the international community's most important initiatives to regulate outstanding disarmament issues and strengthen multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms.

Armenia believes that disarmament and non-proliferation objectives can be achieved only through

vigorous and concerted efforts at the bilateral, regional and international levels. Armenia stands ready to add its contribution to making our world safer and more secure.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Mr. Chairman, let me begin by offering you and all the other members of the Bureau my delegation's warmest congratulations on your respective elections. We trust, Sir, that under your wise leadership the work of our Committee will be steered to a successful conclusion. We assure you of our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your mandate.

We align ourselves fully with the statement made earlier by the representative of the Union of Myanmar, on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Nonetheless, we would like to highlight some underlying points.

Despite some progress in political discussions towards the resumption of the work of the Conference on Disarmament, whose role is to negotiate new arms control and disarmament agreements, there is as yet no light at the end of the tunnel as regards that global exercise to ensure international peace and security. We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment in paragraph 69 of his report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1) that

"Several issues relating to weapons of mass destruction remained of great concern to the international community. These included the slow pace of disarmament, violations of non-proliferation commitments, evidence of a clandestine nuclear network and the threat of terrorism. Such developments jeopardize international peace and security and may increase the risk of new instances of unilateral or preemptive use of force."

The peace-loving world community thus faces an uphill battle to address the risks of a potential nuclear war and to free the world of weapons of mass destruction.

Furthermore, our planet continues to be plagued by lingering armed conflicts, acts of aggression and violence, terror, interference in the internal affairs of States, ethnic strife and civil wars. Those instances of instability and intolerance not only have undermined development gains and the endeavours of the majority

of nations, developing countries in particular, but could also lead to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction against humankind.

In the face of such a dangerous situation, intensified, integrated and coordinated efforts must be made by the world community to address the root causes of friction and to eliminate flash points around the world.

Primarily, greater strides must be made in the holistic pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. To that end, we maintain that urgent consideration must be given to the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument that would provide security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. It is our fervent and legitimate hope that the draft resolution on nuclear disarmament (A/C.1/59/L.26), sponsored by the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and initiated by the Union of Myanmar, will receive the full support of all member States, in particular the nuclear-weapon States.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic remains of the view that the absolute and most credible guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is the total elimination of such weapons. We therefore welcome all efforts undertaken at the international, regional and national levels aimed at reinforcing measures to reduce nuclear risks and dangers. We join the call of the Non-Aligned Movement for the holding of an international conference at the earliest possible date with the objective of arriving at an agreement on a phased, time-bound programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer and use or threat of use, and to provide for their destruction. In that context, we reaffirm our support for the appeal of world leaders, contained in the Millennium Declaration, for stronger efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction — particularly nuclear weapons — and to keep all options open with regard to achieving that goal, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways and means to eliminate nuclear dangers.

We continue to share the concern of the majority of Member States over the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile

defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space, which have, inter alia, contributed to the further erosion of an international environment conducive to the promotion of disarmament and to the strengthening of international security. The abrogation of the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems brings new challenges to strategic stability and to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We cannot fail to be alarmed that the implementation of a national missile defence system could trigger an arms race, the further development of advanced missile systems and an increase in the number of nuclear weapons.

In our view, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should remain a cornerstone of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. It is essential that all States parties to that important Treaty — especially nuclear-weapon States — fulfil their obligations as set out therein. We regret to note the inability of the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference to agree on an agenda or substantive recommendations for the Conference.

Cognizant of the significant implications of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for the process of nuclear disarmament, the Lao People's Democratic Republic ratified the Treaty in October 2000. That showed our Government's strong commitment to nuclear disarmament and reflected our aspiration to live in peace and to build a world free from nuclear threats. However, for the Treaty to be effective, those States signatories that have not yet done so need to ratify it to ensure its universality at the earliest possible date. We also stress the need for the full and effective attainment of the CTBT's objectives by all States signatories, particularly nuclear-weapon States.

Equally essential for the maintenance of international and regional peace and security are universal adherence to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and, in particular, the strengthening of the Convention through multilateral negotiations on a legally binding protocol. We are also of the view that the threat of biological weapons as instruments of war and terror has highlighted the necessity and urgency of ensuring that the Convention is effective. In that regard, strong emphasis must be placed on the need for all States parties to pursue the objectives set forth by the Fourth Review Conference

of the Parties to the Convention. I stress that the only sustainable way in which to strengthen the Convention is through multilateral negotiations aimed at concluding a non-discriminatory, legally binding agreement.

We believe that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a positive and helpful step towards the goal of global nuclear disarmament. As a State party to the Bangkok Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has made every effort to contribute to ASEAN's collective efforts in that regard. Yet, for the Treaty to be effective, nuclear-weapon States must accede to its Protocol. We therefore join other ASEAN member States in welcoming the announcement by the People's Republic of China that it is prepared to accede to the Protocol. We renew our appeal to other nuclear-weapon States to accede to the Protocol as soon as possible.

In view of that situation, it is obvious that one of the most urgent tasks of United Nations Members is to work together in earnest for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We believe that, in order to accomplish that task, we must spare no effort to put the disarmament process back on track. Furthermore, the root causes of instability and conflict — above all, poverty — ought to be dealt with in a more responsible manner. Only by doing so will we be able to gradually build a world that is filled with peace and free from the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

The Chairman (spoke in Spanish): At this time, we will suspend the recording of our proceedings and will move on to a more informal format in order to encourage the interactivity and frankness we have been asked to practise by recent General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 58/316.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

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